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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS AMERICA (CV 66)
FPO AE 09531-2790

5750

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21 MAR 1992

From: Commanding Officer, USS AMERICA (CV 66)
To: Director of Naval History

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR CY-89

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E
(b) CNO ltr 5757 Ser 09BH/SH/2U506454 dtd 20 Feb 92

Encl: (1) Chronological History
(2) Historical Narrative

1. Per reference (a) and in reponse to reference (b), the Command History for CY-89 is submitted as enclosures (1) and (2).

KW Ewing
K. W. EWING

Copy to:
COMCARGRU TWO

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF USS AMERICA (CV 66) FOR 1989

- 7 Jan- AMERICA departs Norfolk Naval Shipyard following restricted availability.
- 8 Feb- AMERICA departs on FLEETEX 2-89/North Star '89/Advanced Phase.
- 21-24 Mar- AMERICA visits St. Thomas, USVI.
- 3 Apr- AMERICA returns to Norfolk.
- 12 Apr- POM.
- 11 May- AMERICA departs on Mediterranean/Indian Ocean deployment.
- 24-30 May- AMERICA visits Benidorm, Spain.
- 3-8 Jun- AMERICA visits Palma de Majorca, Spain.
- 9-18 Jun- National Week Exercise.
- 19-22 Jun- AMERICA visits Izmir, Turkey.
- 25 Jun- AMERICA transits Suez Canal.
- 14-21 Jul- Operations off of Diego Garcia.
- 29 Jul- AMERICA visits Singapore.
- 2 Aug
- 9-31 Aug- North Arabian Sea Operations.
- 26-30 Aug- Exercise Beacon Flash.
- 5 Sep- AMERICA transits Suez Canal.
- 9-14 Sep- AMERICA visits Toulon, France.
- 16 Sep- "Display Determination" exercises.
- 3 Oct
- 11-18 Oct- AMERICA visits Monaco.
- 19-23 Oct- AMERICA visits Palma de Majorca, Spain.
- 26 Oct- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff visits AMERICA.
- 29 Oct- Secretary of Defense visits AMERICA.
- 1-2 Nov- Outchop, Rota, Spain.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Following a successful yard period at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Va., AMERICA moved up the river to Norfolk Naval Base for a short (2 day) in-port period before sailing on her post-yard shakedown. After three days of independent steaming, AMERICA's flight deck was re-opened, with Fleet Carrier Qualifying.

On 8 February 1989, AMERICA sailed for a two-month deployment, which included FLEETEX 2-89, North Star '89, and Advanced Phase. Although she operated from the coldest, northernmost reaches of the world, all the way down to the Puerto Rican operating area (including a brief port visit to St. Thomas), AMERICA scored well on every inspection and aspect of her training. On 3 April 1989, she returned to Norfolk for a week-long in-port period, before beginning her POM prior to the Mediterranean/Indian Ocean deployment.

On 11 May, AMERICA sailed on the 16th major deployment of her 24 years. With Mediterranean stops in Benidorm, Palma, and Izmir, AMERICA had more than 50% fly-days before she transitted the Suez Canal on 25 June. Following the Suez transit, AMERICA spent a week in the Arabian Sea, before making way for the Indian Ocean, where she conducted operations with her airwing (Carrier Airwing ONE), off the coast of Diego Garcia.

The last days in July, 1989 saw AMERICA visiting Singapore for four days, before heading for the North Arabian Sea a week later. While in the North Arabian Sea, AMERICA was a key participant in the exercise "Beacon Flash '89". A week later, on 5 September, AMERICA again transitted the Suez Canal and returned to the Mediterranean. On 6 September, AMERICA shifted embarked flags as COMCRUDESGRU TWO relieved (crossdeck) COMCARGRU TWO.

After a week-long port visit to Toulon, AMERICA participated in the "Display Determination" exercises from 16 September through 3 October. Upon completion of those exercises, AMERICA had a port visit in Monaco (11-18 October) followed by another to Palma (19-23 October). During the Monaco visit, AMERICA conducted a change of command, with Capt. J. J. Mazach assuming command from Capt. J. J. Coonan.

The Palma port visit was the last of the cruise. Before beginning the transit back to Norfolk, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, paid a call on the ship (26 October). Then, on 29 October, Secretary of Defense Cheney visited AMERICA in the Mediterranean.

AMERICA outchopped from the Med on the first two days of November, and then made the transit to Norfolk in eight days. The airwing flew off of the ship on 9 November, the day before AMERICA's return to Norfolk.

Encl (2)

Following a 30-day stand-down in Norfolk, AMERICA spent a short underway period hosting fleet carrier qualifying (seven days) off of the coast of Virginia, before returning to Norfolk for the holidays.

10 Nov- AMERICA returns to Norfolk.

10 Nov- Post-deployment stand-down.

9 Dec

15-21 Dec- Fleet Carrier Qualifying, Virginia Capes.

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

14 May 1989

REL# 27-89

FIRE ABOARD USS AMERICA (CV-66)

At approximately 7:00 pm EST Tuesday, 13 May 1989, an explosion and fire occurred aboard the Norfolk-based aircraft carrier USS AMERICA (CV-66) while operating ~~in the Western Atlantic~~ ^{in the Western Atlantic}. Two crewmen perished as a result of the fire in the number two fuel pump room. Shipboard firefighters successfully extinguished the fire with no additional casualties. The AMERICA is continuing on her assigned mission, a previously scheduled deployment to the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean, ^{which began on Monday, 11 May.} The crewmen who died in the fire have been identified as Petty Officer 3rd Class (Aviation Bos'n Mate-Fuel) Richard E. Childress, 22, of Ham Lake, Minn. and Airman Recruit Larry J. Branson, 19, of Akron, Ohio. An investigation into the cause of the explosion is now underway.

-USN-

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Q1 Where is USS AMERICA? What is her mission? Is she enroute to Panama?

A1 As indicated in the release, USS AMERICA is conducting routine operations in the Western Atlantic. USS America is continuing on her previously scheduled deployment to the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. Beyond that, we do not discuss future operations.

Q2 Is there any connection between the fire on USS AMERICA, USS WHITE PLAINS, and USS IOWA?

A2 No, there is no evidence linking these three separate, isolated incidents.

Q3 Doesn't this call into question the Navy's safety record?

A3 The Navy's overall safety record is superb, and the Navy's record has continued to improve over the years.

Q4 Can you give me more details on the Navy's safety record? Numbers of fires/explosions at sea?

A4 Not at this time. Your question should be directed to the Office of the Chief of Information in Washington, D.C.

Q5 What is happening to the bodies of the deceased? Are they being removed from the ship?

A5 The remains of the deceased will be flown from the ship for transfer to the Portsmouth (VA) Naval Hospital.

Q6 When? Can we film the arrival?

A6 We do not have a time established for the transfer of remains at this time. In fact, the air schedules of our deployed CV's are classified. Filming the arrival of the deceased crewmember's remains will not be possible.

Q7 What is the full extent of the damage?

A7 USS AMERICA is capable of continuing her assigned mission (see Q1 for details). While the full extent of the damage to the number two fuel pump room has not been assessed at this time, aircraft carriers have multiple systems and duplicate capabilities to be able to sustain damage and still perform assigned missions.

Q8 How long did it take to extinguish the fire?

A8 The fire was quickly isolated and brought under control. Because of intense heat in the fuel pump room, it took several hours to safely cool and enter the pump room.

Q9 When will you know the exact extent of the damage?

A9 I don't have an estimate at this time, however, a team of experts will be sent to the ship as soon as possible.

USS AMERICA BATTLE GROUP 1-1-1-1

Rear Adm. Richard D. Milligan, commander Cruiser-Destroyer Group Two, was originally scheduled to command the battle group. Since he is the investigating officer for the April 19 explosion on USS Iowa, he will remain in Norfolk until the completion of that investigation. At that time, he will join the battle group and relieve Smith, who will return to Mayport, Fla.

Cruiser-Destroyer Group Two is based in Charleston, S.C.

Other units in the USS America Carrier Battle Group are: from Mayport, Fla., the guided-missile cruisers USS Mobile Bay and USS Dale; from Cecil Field, Fla., Air Antisubmarine Squadron 32, and Strike Fighter Squadrons 82 and 86; from Jacksonville, Fla., Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 11; from Charleston, S.C., the frigate USS Joseph Hawes; and from Whidbey Island, Wash., Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 137.

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Approx 5,500 on America